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ABSTRACT

This article is in response to Michael Burgoon's call in "Communication Education," October 1989, for the divorcing of speech education from the discipline of communication. It is argued that the lack of isomorphism between speech education and behavioral research in communication reflects a serious imbalance within the discipline, one that has already divided the discipline along media-specific contexts. But rather than concluding that a divorce between speech and communication is desirable, this paper calls for a greater effort by educators to correct an imbalance within the discipline by focusing less on the media of communication and more on the action of communicating. This focus on media has evolved through an increasing awareness of and concern for communication media primarily as a result of the proliferation of electronic communication media in the 20th century. This has resulted in a fragmented discipline, with the study of communication being conducted within numerous subdivisions based on media-specific modes of communication. While theoretical views of communication have largely rejected the tenets of logical empiricism, the discipline's structure continues to reflect reductionist thinking. The various media-specific subdisciplines within the field of communication should strive for a common central focus on communicating. (Thirty-six notes are included.) (Author/PRA)

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Divvying Up the Discipline: On Divorcing Dame Speech

by

Philip A. Thompsen

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Divvying Up the Discipline: On Divorcing Dame Speech

by

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A paper presented to the Speech Communication Association, Atlanta, Georgia, November, 1991

Abstract

This article is a response to Michael Burgoon's call (*Communication Education*, October, 1989) for the divorcing of speech education from the discipline of communication. It is argued that the lack of isomorphism between speech education and behavioral research in communication reflects a serious imbalance within the discipline, one that has already divided the discipline along media-specific contexts. But rather than concluding that a divorce between speech and communication is desirable, this paper calls for a greater effort at correcting an imbalance within the discipline, by focusing less on the media of communication, and focusing more on the action of communicating.

> (While you and i have lips and voices which
> are for kissing and to sing with
> who cares if some oneeyed son of a bitch
> invents an instrument to measure Spring with?
>
> — e.e. cummings
> (quoted in Hawes 1975, vii)

Perhaps no one is taking him seriously. Yet these words of Michael Burgoon (1989), suggesting that the study of speech be "divorced" from the discipline of communication, may have raised a few eyebrows:

> I am not optimistic that the chasm between communication and Speech can ever be bridged. Rather, I think the gulf is so wide that the only rational course of action is for selected departments to secede from the "Speech" community, declare the divorce final and get on with forming a different discipline. (303-304)

I know this raised my eyebrows. So it was with great interest that I attended a debate at the 1990 convention of the Speech Communication Association, where Burgoon was on the attack:

> Burgoon: "I don't need all you speech people! I want to get away from you!"

At first I was taken aback. But then I quietly thought to myself...

What if Burgoon is right? The primarily pedagogical practice of speech wed to the social scientific discipline of communication has not exactly been a close marriage. To be sure, the disciplines of speech and communication, at many institutions, share a common heritage. Burgoon (1989) notes that at Arizona, communication was part of the Department of Speech Communication until 1985, when the department was "eliminated," to use Burgoon's words; at the same time, a different department was being created—"a brand new, basically undefined unit in another academic college" (p. 304). Thinking back on my own experience, I cannot recall studying or teaching in a department where speech and communication were not cohabitating.[1] To be honest, I never really questioned the legitimacy of this arrangement.

But what if Burgoon is right? What if he has accurately identified a sore spot in the discipline, an ulceration that has been festering below the surface for some time, a plump pimple ripe for popping? Have the enrollment-driven, instructional goals of speech educators and the grant-driven, research agendas of communication scholars led to irreconcilable differences? Has the discipline of communication truly been adulterated by an alignment with speech, perhaps even encumbering it with, as Burgoon (1988) characterizes it, "second or third class citizenship within the academic community" (255)?

I am reminded of what Kenneth Boulding (1967) said about Marshall McLuhan: "It is perhaps typical of very creative minds that they hit very large nails not quite on the head" (68). Burgoon has hit a very large nail, one that is reflected in, among other things, the withering away of "speech" from the titles of journals in our field.[2] But from my perspective,

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[1] This group of institutions would include the University of Utah, the University of Kansas, the University of Southwestern Louisiana, Arizona State University, Northern Arizona University, and William Jewell College.

[2] The word "speech" will soon be dropped from the title of the journal of the Western States Communication Association. The *Western Journal of Speech Communication* joins the long list of serials that have spurned the term "speech," including *Speech Monographs* (now *Communication Monographs*), *The Speech Teacher* (now *Communication Education*), *Today's Speech* (now *Communication Quarterly*), *Central States Speech Journal* (now *Communication Studies*), the *Bulletin of the Association of Departments and Administrators in Speech Communication* (now the *Association for Communication Administration Bulletin*), and *Southern Speech Communication Journal* (now *Southern Communication Journal*).

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his blow is off-center. His argument essentially emanates from administrative concerns:

> "Academic units cannot be enrollment-driven in decision making...
>
> Departments cannot be defined by some basic freshman-level service course...
>
> Communication departments do not exist to provide general education courses for the masses..." (Burgoon 1989, 305).

What he fails to do is strike the core of the question, something much more significant than academic housing arrangements.

What I propose to do is address the issue Burgoon raises from what I believe is a more relevant perspective for the discipline as a whole. I don't claim to be a marriage counselor, but I'm not convinced one is necessary. From my perspective, the question is not "Should speech and communication be divorced?" but rather "Were speech and communication ever married in the first place?" My own personal feeling is that they have essentially been living in sin, and that there may be no reason to call off the affair as long as both enjoy it, and respect each other as mutually consenting, mature adults.

I believe Burgoon's complaint is symptomatic of an unfortunate and unnecessary conceptual imbalance that, while certainly not universal, is still a fairly common malady within our ranks. Simply stated, it is *the tendency to focus more on the media of communication than on the action of communicating*.[3] To illustrate this, I first offer a few reflections on our discipline's past that provide a perspective on how a focus on media has evolved within the discipline; I will show that there has been an increasing awareness of and concern for communication media, primarily as a result of the proliferation of electronic communication media in the twentieth century. Second, I will demonstrate how this has resulted in a fragmented discipline, with the study of communication being conducted within numerous sub-disciplines based on media-specific modes of communication. I argue that while theoretic views of communication have largely rejected the tenets of logical empiricism, our discipline's structure continues to reflect reductionist thinking. Finally, I suggest that the various media-specific sub-disciplines within the field of communication should strive for a common central focus on communicating; such a perspective reframes the issue Burgoon raises, so that the resolution is dependent more on what we do than on what we think we do.

> All Media of Communications are clichés serving to enlarge man's scope of action, his patterns of association and awareness. These media create environments that numb our powers of attention by sheer pervasiveness.
>
> — Marshall McLuhan (1970, 57)

Speech has enjoyed a privileged place in the communication discipline, as it represents the academic tradition where most communication departments claim their roots. The contemporary scholarly study of communication can be traced to the beginning of the speech discipline in the early part of this century. In 1914, a small group of disgruntled English teachers gave birth to the National Association of Academic Teachers of Public Speaking, an organization dedicated to providing "academic identity" and promoting "professional development of members and the discipline" (Phillips and Wood 1990, vii). Although rhetoric had been a topic of scholarship for centuries, the modern-day study of communication was in large part propelled by the formation of this first national association of speech educators,[4] and the publication the following year of the first scholarly journal in our field (now known as the *Quarterly Journal of Speech*). What that renegade band of English professors started in 1914 was more than just a professional organization—it was a seminal achievement in the development of the speech communication discipline.

That achievement also represented a major fragmenting—an initial "divvying up"—of the concept of communication. In the move away from English departments, speech departments had to maintain a clear distinction, and that difference was based on the medium of communication, between the spoken word and the written word. Woolbert (1916) made the division explicit:

> There should be separate departments for these two lines of study, because *they are essentially different disciplines*...they differ in their field of operations. English is given up specifically to thought that is written, speech science to thought that is spoken....The two disciplines ought never to be confused, since they are so easily kept apart. (65)

In making such a distinction, speech scholars were defining a media-specific discipline; the medium of

[3] My use of the gerund form is both a deliberate attempt to express communication as a continuing action, and a call for greater involvement in that action by those who study it.

[4] Although the National Association of Academic Teachers of Public Speaking was the first national association, the Eastern Communication Association can trace its roots back to 1910, when the Speech Association of the Eastern States was established (Oliver 1967, 276).

communication (what Woolbert referred to as the "field of operations") became the principal distinguishing characteristic between these two approaches to the study of human communication.

At the time, this division may not have been seen as a fracturing of the study of communication along media-delimited boundaries, but rather reflective of a natural difference between temporal concerns. Woolbert (1916) went on to say that "English is concerned with the past more than with the present, while speech science must occupy itself more with the present than with the past" (65). O'Neill (1916) used a "generation gap" metaphor of a mother and child to illustrate the differences in maturity between English and speech:

> I trust there is no trace of antagonism to, bitterness toward, or disrespect for, our foster-mother, the English department. It is true that in some institutions the child and its foster-parent have contended with each other in the past with varying results....But fortunately, in most places...the necessary and natural freedom of the offspring has resulted in a separation accompanied by the cordial mutual respect and help usually found between parent and child after the latter has...established himself on his own responsibility. (54)

O'Neill saw the separation of speech from English as the natural and necessary result of the maturing of speech scholarship, as a son would appropriately leave the home of his youth upon reaching the age of accountability. His use of a familial metaphor seems ironic in light of Burgoon's call for a divorce of communication from speech; given O'Neill's perception of blood ties between English and speech, Burgoon's analogy would place communication in the unenviable position of having English for a mother-in-law.

The mediated nature of communication may not have seemed significant to the founders of the speech discipline, yet a torrent of information technologies in the twentieth century would soon bring media to a place of prominence in the discipline of communication. Broadcasting has influenced, and been influenced by, the speech discipline since the early 1920s. Many of the nascent departments of speech were eager to provide programming for radio, to study the use of speech on radio, and to include instruction in radio speech within their curricula. Head and Martin (1956/57) describe this early acceptance of radio within the speech discipline:

> Initially, to introduce broadcasting as a subject of study into the college curriculum at all required a rationalization which said, in effect, "We know that broadcasting is not in itself a fit subject for college instruction, but insofar as it is an aspect of speech...we can give it house-room." (39-40)

In hindsight, the reasoning that broadcasting is "an aspect of speech" seems faulty; both speech and broadcasting are "aspects" of communication, or more precisely, media of communication. This realization, however, would take time.

The early embrace of broadcasting was not without its price; to include radio communication within the purview of speech scholarship required some stretching of the conceptual boundaries of the discipline. Radio communication was viewed as an extension of speech communication, broadening the conceptual definition of the discipline to include electronically mediated forms of communication. Froke (1960) observed that the acceptance of broadcasting as part of the speech discipline was probably due to what speech and broadcasting had in common—the voice: "The historical home of broadcasting is the speech department, a fact probably explained by the surface image of broadcasting, the voice..." (287). Although it may have seemed quite natural to extend the concept of speech to include broadcast speech, doing so opened the discipline's conceptual doors to a medium of communication that would prove to be quite different from speech.

The significance of this conceptual progression may have seemed minimal in the 1920s, when most radio programming relied heavily on the spoken word. But with the rise of television, radio evolved from a means of transmitting speech to a means of transmitting music. Television became the principal means of transmitting popular culture, achieving the distinction of being, in Newcomb's (1974) words, "America's most popular art." Despite the additional required conceptual stretching of the definition of speech, there seemed to be little resistance to accepting television as a legitimate area of study within the speech discipline. Scanlan (1944) issued an early, passionate plea to his colleagues in speech to take advantage of the "pioneering opportunity" television offered:

> The prospects for television will naturally excite the interest of teachers of speech...In the general domain of the speech arts, it is a pioneering opportunity almost without parallel since the days of Corax and Tisias. (140-141)

The opportunity was seized, and television broadcasting had soon attained a place of status within speech scholarship, as Willis (1955) observed:

> In the years since the end of World War II, the area of radio and television has won its place as a subject of specialized graduate study in many departments of Speech and has been listed by the Speech Association of America as one of the major areas making up our general field. (261)

Unlike the rationale used to include radio within the speech discipline, however, television was more than just an extension of speech. Television was, to use McLuhan's (1964) phrase, an "extension of man." The conceptual boundaries of the speech discipline were stretched by radio, but they were essentially redefined by television.

Radio, and especially television, brought revolutionary changes to the way people communicate, and in the way people think about communication. Phrasing this idea in his characteristically distinctive prose, McLuhan (1973) augurs:

> If the telegraph and the telephone revolutionized the patterns of information and speech in poetry and journalism, the advent of TV may carry us beyond speech altogether. (52)

Broadcasting did carry the study of speech beyond itself, to the study of the central process behind both speech and broadcasting. The awareness that there was a common, underlying process involved in speech, radio and television led to the realization that the distinguishing characteristic was the medium of communication.

Whether written, spoken, or electronically transmitted, communication cannot occur without a medium, as Chesebro (1989) notes:

> All communication requires that some apparatus be employed to convey messages to others. Thoughts cannot be conveyed mentalistically directly from one mind to another. A communication channel or apparatus must be used....We do not convey conceptions and understandings to others directly; all communication is inherently mediated. (7)

While few today would deny that communication is "inherently mediated," at what point did we become aware of the mediated nature of communication? Ong (1967) suggests that the concept of communication media is a relatively recent one:

> In terms of communications media, cultures can be divided conveniently and informatively into three successive stages: (1) oral ...(2) script...and (3) electronic....Awareness of the succession of the media stages and wonder about the meaning of this succession are themselves the product of the succession. We have come into this awareness only as we have entered the electronic age. (17)

While communication has always been mediated, the realization that communication is media-dependent can be attributed to the proliferation of electronic communication media during the twentieth century; television, in particular, has contributed to the objectification of the concept of "media" in the consciousness of of our society. Has this "media awareness" influenced the structure of our discipline?

> A tangle of individual organisms
> can be so interrelated
> that the lot can be viewed
> as an individual organism.
> The invader in a body
> can become so incorporated
> in that body's processes
> as to become in effect
> a physiological function of that body.
>
> — Kenneth Burke
> (1981, 331)

If you were to take a very close look at one of the letters on this page, you would see that it is actually a group of dots, carefully aligned in a pattern. The groups of dots on this page are deliberately arranged to give the impression, from a distance, that they are letters and not just dots. In turn, the letters have been carefully gathered together to form words, and the words gathered into sentences, and the sentences into paragraphs. If I've done my job well, these paragraphs, sentences, words, letters and dots (and perhaps even the "white space") work in harmony to advance my goal of engaging you in the social action of creating shared meaning.[5]

Achieving that goal depends in part on how easily you can go beyond the microscopic level of observation (dots, letters, words, etc.) and interpretively create from these symbols a "message," something with a meaning for you that is reasonably similar to my intended meaning. For example, if my printer had a very "low resolution," there might be some momentary confusion drawing your attention to the dots. The italic letters *i* and *l* can sometimes appear to look the same, especially if they appear in a small size. You might experience some momentary distraction, interrupting the meaningful impression I intended with a different impression, one with an unintentional meaning (perhaps something like "I need new glasses" or "this would have been easier to read if he hadn't tried to save copying costs by making the type single-spaced"). Similarly, if I accidentally misspell a word, either through typographic miscue or orthographical ignorance, your attention might be drawn toward the misplaced letger and away from the intended meaning (was your attention drawn momentarily to the letter "g" in "letger"?) Likewise, if you see a word you aren't familiar with (like orthographical) your attention might be drawn to the word-level, or your attention might be drawn to the sentence-level if a sentence has so many clauses and

[5] My concept of shared meaning is greatly informed by George Herbert Mead's notion of "significant symbols," achieved through "mutual role-taking," which for Herbert Blumer (1969) was "the *sine qua non* of communication" (10).

competing ideas connected together in a long, rambling, run-on construction, leading the reader off into many directions at once, making it difficult to see what the central idea is, taking attention away from the intended meaning, requiring greater energy on the part of the reader to wade through a sea of ideas that really needed to be organized more clearly in the first place, not unlike the condition the sentence you are now reading is beginning to show signs of...well, you get the idea.

There is something more significant than ink on paper here, more significant than letters, words and sentences. That "something" is communication. More specifically, it is the social action of engaging in communication, the action of communicating. It does not occur because of the medium; it occurs because we agree to use this medium to engage in communicating. Our ability to achieve a "high resolution" on communication depends to a great extent on the perceived "transparency"[6] of the medium of communication. Stated another way, communication is more likely to be "successful" if the medium of communication is supportive of, subservient to and subliminal in the process of communication.

This is not to say that media do not influence the process of communication—quite the opposite. The influence of the medium on communication is a critical one—it can make it or break it. A focus on the creation of shared meaning is made possible by the medium; the medium provides the means of communication. But too much focus on the medium of communication can interfere with the process of communication, by drawing attention away from the creation of shared meaning, or, more precisely, drawing attention to the creation of meaning that is not shared.

Let me stress that I am not suggesting that our discipline has confused media with communication, but rather that at times we have given a disproportionate amount of our attention to media. Recall my central argument, that some in the discipline of communication display a tendency to focus more on the media of communication than on the action of communicating. Just as too much focus on the letters and dots on this page can distort the interactive process of communication, so too much attention on media can make it difficult for our discipline to see "the big picture," to concentrate our combined intellectual energies on a broader concern with the action of communicating. Have some of us, in our pursuit of understanding communication, concentrated too much on the microscopic level of investigation, by focussing on media?

I believe a conceptual imbalance in our field is reflected in the fragmenting of the discipline into various media-specific domains—oral, print, electronic—and within each domain, additional divisions bounded by mediated contexts. Thus, the oral communication media domain would include public address, rhetorical criticism, small group communication, interpersonal communication, and some aspects of organizational communication; the electronic communication media domain would include radio, television, computer-mediated communication, and telecommunication; the print communication media domain would include newspapers, magazines, and, to some extent, advertising and public relations. These areas represent vital parts of the discipline of communication, but why do we find it necessary to divvy up our discipline into parts?

Perhaps our discipline is still suffering from the lingering influence of logical empiricism, and in particular, what Matson (1964) identifies as "the postulate of mechanistic reductionism: the analytical breakdown of all objects of investigation into their simplest observable parts or elements" (34). In the early attempts at an analytical breakdown of communication, the medium was often identified as one of the simplest observable parts. For example, Lasswell (1948) included the "channel" in the dictum "who says what in which channel to whom with what effect" (37); the channel was central to Shannon and Weaver's (1949) mechanistic model of communication; and Johnson (1951) used the concept of channel in his "schematic" of communication. Such structural interpretations of communication have been widely criticized, and the tenets of logical empiricism that they evolved from have been been largely rejected by contemporary science, as Okeefe (1975), paraphrasing Suppe (1974), has pointed out:

> The logical empiricist conception of the scientific enterprise has long dominated communication theory and research. But in recent years the criticism of this conception has been so incisive that Suppe can now call the logical empiricist approach "a view abandoned by most philosophers of science" and can speak of its general rejection. (169)

Yet the communication discipline has been slow to change. Smith (1972) argued that

> If we all—or almost all—agree that communication is a process, and yet if few of our efforts at research employ the process idea perhaps it is time to examine...why our theories differ from our studies. (174-175)

I would add that it may also be time to examine why our theories differ from the structure of the discipline, for the persistent typology of communication

[6] I do not mean to imply here that media are in fact transparent, but that they may appear to be so in perception. Poster (1990) offers a convincing argument against a simplistic view of the social level of discourse, in which "language is nothing more than a transparent mediation" (12).

studies into media-specific contexts is reflective of our refusal to give up the convenience of reductionistic thought. Can communication be studied holistically while the discipline of communication remains splintered into constituent parts?

Furthermore, is any one of these "parts" *central* to our discipline? Historically, speech had been the central "part" of the discipline. But with the growing number of communication media demanding attention, speech has widely been dethroned from a position of supremacy. Replacing "Dame Speech"[7] has not been completely successful; for the most part, attempts to elevate other communication media to positions of equal importance have only fueled dissension among the ranks. Instead of agreeing on a common focus or a central concern, we have usually raised the flag of pluralism, agreeing to disagree, just so long as no blood is shed. Fisher (1978) articulated this call for compassion:

> Above all else, we need to exercise tolerance. Not tolerance in the sense that anyone can do his own thing, but tolerance in the sense of understanding what others are doing and thereby understanding what you yourself are doing—and why you are doing it....The field of human communication is simply not characterized by a single paradigm. The reality of the scientific community is that of a loosely connected band of scholars who disagree on far more issues than they agree on....Fractionation and splintering characterize the scientific community of human communication. (323-324)

Yet, it seems remarkable that, for all our diversity, for all the different forms of communication we have studied, for all of the media-defined specialties we have created, we still know very little about communication. Pearce (1989) has observed:

> As of this writing, it is fair to say that the "discovery" of communication resembles the experience of a tall person who discovers a low doorway while walking about in a darkened room. The fact of the existence of something there is painfully obvious, but its meaning and shape remain to be ascertained. There is now a general consensus that we have collectively passed a watershed of some sort in our understanding of communication, but there is no consensus about just what the new idea of how communication works is or in what vocabulary it should be expressed. (10)

In a sense, the discipline of communication has been hitting a very large nail not quite on the head, because many have been looking at the hammer, and only a few have been practicing their aim.

> See, that's the hell of it.
> That there is a world of abstract epistemology
> and there is a world of epistemology
> of actual organisms interacting.
> The way in which they think they know,
> and the way in which thinking and knowing
> have to be done,
> are not necessarily the same.
>
> — Gregory Bateson
> (1981, 354)

I saw it in Radio Shack the other day, and I want one. It's a device that's put on the end of the coiled cord connecting the telephone to the handset. Its purpose is to swivel the cord as one swivels the handset, serving to avoid those nasty kinks that eventually make their way into the cord, giving it the appearance of a mutated double helix. It allows the natural resiliency of the coil to act as a servo-mechanism, providing a complementary twist on the cord for each twist of the handset. Of course, we wouldn't need such a gadget if (1) we never turned the handset over, or (2) the cord wasn't coiled. But it's impractical to suggest that one could use a telephone without eventually twisting the cord—it happens every time the handset is moved from one ear to another. And the cord is coiled for a good reason: this allows a long cord to fit in a small space. A coiled cord is also physically thicker than a straight cord, so a vacuum cleaner is less likely to accidentally suck it up.

Now picture the academic discipline of communication as a coiled telephone cord.[8] Each of the individual curls on the coil represent one of the divisions of our discipline: public speaking, interpersonal communication, organizational communication, small group communication, visual communication, radio communication, and so on. Each of the divisions of the discipline, similar to each of the curls on the coil, are connected together to form a united whole. The curls on the coil are only apparent because the cord is coiled—they didn't exist until someone at the phone cord company coiled it. The divisions in our discipline are apparent because each of the media-specific areas of study has pulled scholarship inward upon it-

[7] This is Burgoon's (1989) term. It was suggested in the debate referred to earlier that one reason for endowing Speech with a feminine identity was Burgoon's desire to "leave the kids" with mom, a reference to the vast numbers of undergraduates required to endure freshman-level "service courses" in speech communication.

[8] For the benefit of the interested reader, I refer to the "About the House" series of articles by Arthur Asa Berger (1990), where he constructs insightful metaphors with a variety of household objects, including the toaster, the king-sized bed, the refrigerator, and the Water Pik shower head.

self, each giving the concept of communication its own distinctive twist; besides, erecting a media typology of communication helps make the discipline appear academically "thicker." Stretching the telephone cord causes the curls to widen; keep stretching, and it eventually takes on the appearance of one long, thin, straight cord. Conceptually "stretching" our discipline, by adopting a view that privileges communication media, causes a larger (and much thinner) discipline to appear.

And then the phone rings. "Hello? ...Yes? ...Dr. Burgoon, it's for you. Someone who calls herself Dame Speech."

Should he decide to accept the call, might he discover that what he's been looking at is not what he's looking for? The phone cord, after all, is just part of the phone. The medium, after all, is just part of communication. But neither the phone cord, nor the phone, are of value *without someone to talk to*. Perhaps the study of communication media, and even the study of the communication itself, are of little value without someone to talk to. Goodall (1989) makes this observation:

> I have always found it ironic that the discipline of communication has yet to produce any nationally recognized literary figure. If we know so much about how to communicate a message to an audience, then how come we aren't being widely read or listened to?
>
> The answer is one of two possibilities. Either the public is not really interested in what we are writing about, or that the way we write fails to communicate to readers. Either way, the answer is not very flattering. If we are not writing about what the public thinks is important, then we had better learn how to make them believe it is important...On the other hand, if we are failing to communicate to our readers, why should we claim to be authorities on the subject of communication? (138)

Goodall has identified a significant flaw with much contemporary communication scholarship—that it doesn't communicate very well. As communication scholars, we have not always taken seriously the responsibility to practice what we preach, to apply what we have learned about communication to the task of communicating.

I believe we should...and can. Our future attempts at constructing a richer, deeper, more satisfyingly complete analysis of communication should not only increase our understanding of communication, but also help make us better communicators. Our scholarship does not have to divide us, but can serve to bring our intellectual community closer together, achieving greater communication among ourselves. If our discipline suffers from, as Burgoon claims, "second or third class citizenship within the academic community," then let's do what good citizens do—let's engage in philanthropy, giving back to the academic community—and especially to our students—something we would all benefit from: the skill to communicate. We have engaged in social science to learn a lot *about* communication; let us also engage in social practice to learn *how to communicate*.

The case for balance in our discipline was eloquently pleaded by Wood (1984) in her review of group communication scholarship. Noting that most studies suffered from a "lack of any consistent focus on *communication*" (3), she concluded:

> The ultimate mission of knowledge in fields of social inquiry is improving the human condition. To isolate ourselves from this goal is to risk becoming trivial. Let us get on with the business of developing knowledge that contributes to the stature of our discipline and to the quality of our shared social world. (8)

Consonant with my argument for a greater focus on the active experiencing of communication, Arnold (1990) notes

> that as the twentieth century draws to a close, students of human communication find themselves living in a new intellectual world. Old definitions and old ways of explaining how and why communication affects us have proved inadequate....Our critical question has become: What *is* the nature of an *interactive experiencing* of communication? (337-338)

That question may best be answered by an integration of our science with our practice, a balance between careful observation of communication, and the skillful communicating of our observations.

I hope I get around to buying that gadget at Radio Shack, since my phone cord is getting kinky on me. The phone still works, but if I pick up the handset quickly the tightly knotted cord momentarily lifts the whole phone off the table. Perhaps our discipline could use a gadget like this, too. Something that, despite constant twisting by our various media-specific sub-disciplines, would keep us aligned with each other, balancing our science and our craft. Until we find such a thing, we must remain alert to those who seek to distort the discipline, to twist us out of shape, to tie us into knots...or, as some would propose, to rip the phone off the wall.

> The Ivory Tower becomes
> the control tower of human navigation
>
> — Marshall McLuhan
> (1969, 143)

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